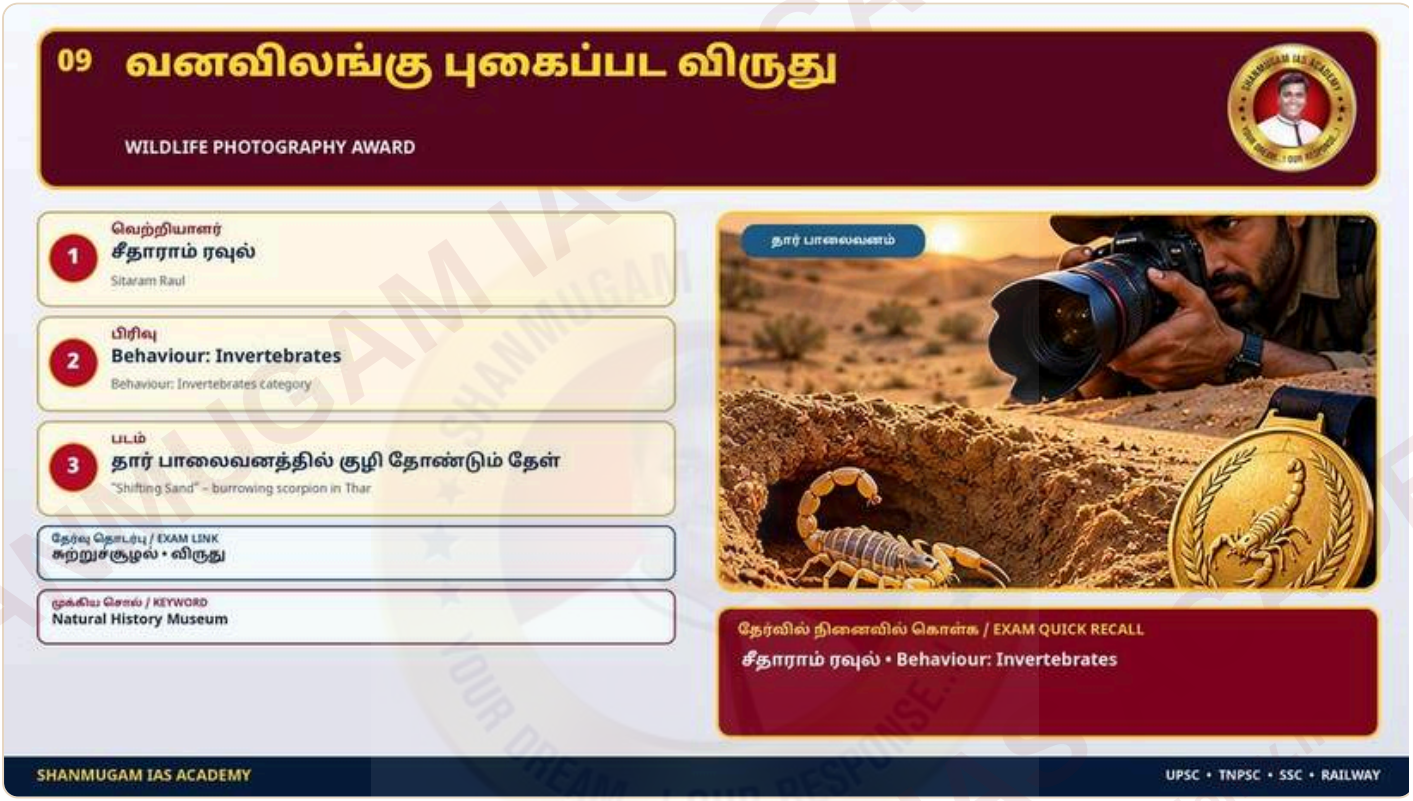
Indian photographer Sitaram Raul wins 'Behaviour: Invertebrates' category at Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2026

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News

Sitaram Raul, a photographer from Badlapur, Maharashtra, won the 'Behaviour: Invertebrates' category of the 62nd Wildlife Photographer of the Year (WPY) competition run by the Natural History Museum (NHM), London. Results were announced in London on 13 Oct 2026. His image 'Shifting Sand' shows a Buthacus scorpion burrowing into a sand dune at sunrise to escape the heat, near Sam village in Rajasthan's Thar Desert – timed so that the dug-out sand hangs in the air. The competition drew more than 65,000 entries from 121 countries.

Key facts

Winner	Sitaram Raul – Badlapur (Maharashtra); wildlife and macro photographer
Category / image	Behaviour: Invertebrates – 'Shifting Sand' (Buthacus scorpion)
Location	Near Sam village, Thar Desert, Rajasthan
Announced	13 Oct 2026, London; exhibition from 16 Oct 2026 at NHM
Overall winner	Federico Veronesi (Italy) – 'The Aftermath'

Earlier honour	2025 – 'Highly Commended', Urban Wildlife (fruit bats, Maharashtra)

Background

- Science: scorpions are arthropods of the class Arachnida (like spiders, ticks and mites) – four pairs (8) of legs, pincer-like pedipalps and a venomous sting at the tail tip. They give birth to live young. Under ultraviolet (UV) light they glow blue-green because of chemicals such as beta-carboline in the cuticle. There are over 2,500 described species.
- Medicine: the sting of the Indian red scorpion (Hottentotta tamulus) can be fatal. Dr Himmatrao Bawaskar of Maharashtra's Konkan region showed that the drug prazosin sharply cuts scorpion-sting deaths (The Lancet, 1986); he received the Padma Shri in 2022.
- Geography: the Thar (Great Indian Desert) lies mostly in Rajasthan and extends into Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab and Pakistan. The Sam sand dunes are in Jaisalmer district. The Desert National Park (Jaisalmer–Barmer) is a key home of the Critically Endangered Great Indian Bustard.
- Competition: WPY has run since 1965 and is organised by the Natural History Museum, London; it is often called the 'Oscars of wildlife photography'.

Tamil Nadu link: the award has no direct Tamil Nadu link. But Tamil Nadu has its own small 'desert' – the red 'Theri' sand dunes near Tiruchendur, Thoothukudi district. They are red because iron-rich minerals such as ilmenite, magnetite and garnet were oxidised; south-west monsoon winds are thought to have carried the sand from the Nanguneri area of Tirunelveli district.

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